

VZCZCXRO6268
PP RUEH DU RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO
DE RUEHDO #0760/01 3020446
ZNY CCCCC ZZH ZDS
P 280446Z OCT 08
FM AMEMBASSY DOHA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8358
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000760

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - ADDRESSEE ADDED

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/27/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [QA](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: FRENCH GUARDEDLY OPTIMISTIC ON QATARI INITIATIVE
ON DARFUR

REF: A. DOHA 756
[1](#)B. DOHA 743

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Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron, for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

(C) KEY POINTS

-- French Special Envoy for Darfur Isaa Maraut is generally optimistic on the prospects for success of the "Qatari Initiative" on Darfur. He noted that President Sarkozy of France had encouraged Qatar, through the Amir, to become involved.

-- In Maraut's view, Qatar wants to succeed and is predisposed to coordinate its activities with the P-3 and Contact Group. He praised Minister of State Al-Mahmood's efforts and inclusive approach.

-- Less clear is the role Qatar envisions for UN and African Union mediator for Darfur Djibril Bassole, the prospects for including minor dissident groups in the negotiations, and the chances of reconciling Chad and Sudan.

(C) COMMENT

-- Maraut's temporary posting to the French Embassy in Doha is a sign of the seriousness with which France views Qatar's involvement on Darfur.

-- For someone in Qatar for a little over two weeks, Maraut seems remarkably confident in his assessment of Al-Mahmood and his intentions, suggesting to us much French/Qatari collaboration on the way ahead.

-- We note that Maraut's optimism was not fully shared by Deputy Director of Canada's Sudan task Force Louis Guay, who called on Ambassador October 23. Guay expressed concern that Qatar may not sufficiently draw on the expertise of the Contact Group and observed that Qatar faces an uphill battle gaining the trust of Chad, which he said likely views Qatar as too supportive of Sudan during Qatar's 2006-07 UN Security Council stint to be an effective mediator.

END KEY POINTS AND COMMENT.

[1](#)1. (C) France's Special Envoy for the Peace Negotiations on Darfur, Isaa Maraut, who has been temporarily posted to the French Embassy in Doha until at least December to interface with the Government of Qatar on its Darfur initiative, told

P/E Chief October 27 that Qatar's approach to Darfur was "serious but prudent." From the vantage point of someone with long experience in Khartoum (he said he has worked with three U.S. Charges d'Affaires there), Maraut said now was an "opportune time" under Qatar's leadership to make real progress toward a solution. Maraut underscored that the way forward is fraught with risk, but he was optimistic that the "Qatari Initiative" could succeed. He also noted that President Sarkozy had encouraged the Amir to mediate a solution on Darfur at their meeting in Damascus with Turkish and Syrian counterparts in early September.

¶2. (C) According to Maraut, the P-3 (U.S., UK, and France), Canada, the African Union (AU), the UN, and Arab League all want Qatar to succeed. Maraut observed that Qatar did not have the same expertise in Sudanese issues that it may have enjoyed in successfully mediating the Lebanese conflict in June, but he pointed out four reasons for optimism: the four African states working alongside Qatar to move the peace process forward. Maraut characterized Egypt as a country with extensive understanding of Sudan and one that believes resolving the Sudanese conflicts is in its strategic interest; Libya's support for various opposition groups in Sudan as important; Eritrea's contacts with the opposition as useful; and Chad -- host to large numbers of refugees and whose current and immediate past Presidents had extensive ties to Darfur -- as vital to a solution.

¶3. (C) Turning to Qatar's role, Maraut said Qatar is predisposed to coordinate its activities and work closely with the P-3 and the Contact Group. Maraut said it is clear that Qatar wants to succeed. What was less clear at this point was whether the P-3 and members of the Contact Group would be observers or facilitators in the process. Maraut was also uncertain to what extent China and Russia would support Qatar's work. In his view, Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ahmed bin Abdullah Al-Mahmood, was honest, hard-working, and rigorous in his thinking. He

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believed Al-Mahmood seeks as much inclusiveness as possible, which bodes well in Maraut's view for P-3 interests.

¶4. (C) Maraut was not clear, however, on what role Qatar envisions for the UN and AU mediator for Darfur, Djibril Bassole. It was France's view, said Maraut, that he should have a central role in the Qatari Initiative. The other risk to the Qatari Initiative, observed Maraut, was the opposition of some Sudanese dissident groups to an Arab League role, even as the two main groups (the Sudanese Liberation Movement and the Justice and Equality Movement) have accepted Qatar's involvement. Finally, while Chad accepted Qatar's role in trying to forge a solution to the conflict, it remains to be seen how Qatar (and its partners) will find a way to reconcile Chad and Sudan, underscored Maraut.

¶5. (C) Returning to his general theme of optimism, Maraut said the International Criminal Court's consideration of Darfur-related matters was an impetus for the good when it comes to exerting pressure on the various parties to talk. Another reason for optimism, continued Maraut, is Al-Mahmood's view that the preparations for any discussions among the parties to the conflict must be very thorough and made without haste. Important, too, is Qatar's predisposition to keep the media away from any discussions among the parties; this was especially important should Qatar succeed in bringing the various parties to Doha for discussions.
LeBaron